

Alena A. Principato. Perspectives on Presentation and Perception of UNC Libraries on Admissions Campus Tours. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. April, 2017. 60 pages. Advisor: Brian Sturm

This paper examines the presentation and perception of the libraries by tour guides at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill during Admissions campus tours for prospective students and families. Perspectives from tour guides, librarians, and admissions staff are considered through an analysis of tour observations and interviews with library and admissions staff. Tour guides' statements about the libraries varied, sometimes containing misperceptions and inaccurate claims, but for the most part indicating that they viewed the libraries as positive and valuable places. This paper discusses the value of collaboration between academic libraries and admissions departments to ensure that guide training incorporates useful and relevant information about the library that will aid prospective students in (1) understanding the library's role on a university campus, (2) feeling welcome and comfortable in the library space, and (3) envisioning themselves using the library and taking advantage of library spaces, collections, services, and staff.

Headings:

Academic libraries – Marketing

Academic librarians – Interviews

Academic libraries

Library marketing

PERSPECTIVES ON PRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION OF
UNC LIBRARIES ON ADMISSIONS CAMPUS TOURS

by
Alena A. Principato

A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in
Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 2017

Approved by

Brian Sturm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to my advisors, Brian Sturm and Emily Jack, for graciously and generously lending their time and expertise. Their thoughtful insights have improved this paper and I am grateful for their support throughout the research and writing process.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
1.1	Libraries and campus tours	4
1.2	Admissions tours at the UNC-Chapel Hill	5
2	Literature Review	7
2.1	Marketing the academic library.....	7
2.2	Libraries and the college admissions process	9
3	Methodology	16
4	Findings.....	20
4.1	From the tour guides' perspective.....	20
4.1.1	Library System.....	20
4.1.2	Interlibrary loan (ILL).....	21
4.1.3	Space	24
4.1.4	Personal attachment	25
4.1.5	Materials and collections	26
4.1.6	Student rituals and traditions	28
4.1.7	History and legends.....	29
4.1.8	Accessibility (of building)	30
4.1.9	Atmosphere	31
4.1.10	Technology	34
4.1.11	Research.....	35
4.2	From the librarians' perspective.....	36
4.2.1	Talking points to prioritize.....	37
4.2.2	What matters to a prospective student?	41
4.2.3	Where should they go?.....	42
4.2.4	The big picture	44
4.3	From the Admissions staff perspective	45
4.3.1	Developing the campus tour	45
4.3.2	How are guides trained?.....	47

4.3.3	What are the guides saying?	49
5	Conclusions.....	52
6	Future Research	55
7	Bibliography	56
8	Appendix: Interview Questions	58
8.1	Interview questions for the Librarians and Library Administrator	58
8.2	Interview questions for the Admissions Staff	58

1 Introduction

1.1 Libraries and campus tours

Campus tours provide a crucial opportunity for colleges and universities to woo prospective students. In the course of roughly an hour, student tour guides must convey a wide spectrum of the undergraduate experience, from academics to residential and social life. The stakes are high as these tours frequently offer prospective students a first impression of the campus environment, facilities, and culture of the community of students, staff, and faculty. A tour can make or break the student's decision to apply or accept an offer of admission.

Admissions tour guides seek to present the best of what their university has to offer. As the heart of academic and research life on campus, libraries are an essential stop on campus tours. In a brief amount of time, the tour guide is tasked with describing the library's major spaces and services. Depending on the guide and their level of knowledge and training, the caliber and content of the information presented about the library on campus tours can vary widely. As part of the library's broader marketing and outreach efforts, the quality of general campus tours led by these student guides needs careful and constant attention.

Many academic libraries offer tours for incoming students to orient them to the library building as well as provide an overview of the many physical and digital resources that students can access through the library. However, campus tours led by undergraduate

students working for the admissions department are outside of the library's direct control. Student tour guides are students before they are tour guides: They inevitably have varying impressions of the library based on their personal experience using it and the interactions they have had with the library staff. As such, their statements about the library can be unpredictable. Even guides who have undergone thorough training may go off-script by telling a personal anecdote.

It is also possible that student tour guides will unintentionally relay incorrect information about the library. With a lot of ground to cover, details on specific library policies, spaces, and services can slip through the cracks in a campus tour. Such misinformation can take the forms of inflation, misdirection, or factual inaccuracies, potentially setting unrealistic expectations and leading to misconceptions that persist when a prospective student returns as an enrolled student.

Librarians understand the vital importance of communicating our value to our users and potential users. Although they may seem outside of our scope, admissions campus tours that highlight the library are a marketing opportunity that librarians should evaluate and influence. It is worth investigating how the student tour guides communicate the value of the library, and how the library can work with the admissions office to ensure that guide training incorporates useful and relevant information about the library. Ideally, tours would showcase the main libraries on campus while highlighting the most salient points about their spaces, services, and resources for helping undergraduate students.

1.2 Admissions tours at the UNC-Chapel Hill

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a large public research university with an enrollment of over 29,000 students, more than 18,000 of whom are

undergraduate students. Admission is competitive, and the University regularly offers admissions tours to introduce prospective students to the campus community. Tours are given by student volunteers known as Admissions Ambassadors. Admissions Ambassadors is a student program under the auspices of the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and is led by an executive team of student members. According to the program's website:

The mission of Admissions Ambassadors is to welcome prospective students and family members to the university in a way that reveals the true nature of UNC, often through the power of story. By relaying personal Carolina stories of their journey to college and experiences at UNC, Admissions Ambassadors have the unique chance to impact the lives of thousands of incoming students in one of the most important decisions they will ever make.... Admissions Ambassadors strives to authentically and positively reflect the universities' core values as a microcosm of the student body. Admissions Ambassadors are intellectually curious, compassionate and willing to give their time and effort toward bettering the UNC community and celebrating it with prospective students and families. ("About")

The UNC Admissions website page on touring Carolina emphasizes that visiting campus is one of the best ways to understand what the student experience is like at UNC. Prospective students and their families can schedule a visit that includes a 45-minute information session with an admissions staff member, followed by a 75-90-minute walking tour of campus led by a current student.

This paper investigates how student tour guides perceive and talk about the UNC Libraries to prospective students and families during admissions campus tours, and discusses what information library staff would ideally like guides to share about the libraries for the campus tour audience.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Marketing the academic library

Academic librarians today recognize the importance of marketing their institutions to stakeholders at all levels. How to communicate value is a popular theme in the library literature, and many resources exist to help librarians navigate the world of marketing. In 2010 the American Library Association published *Building a Buzz: Libraries & Word-of-mouth Marketing* by Peggy Barber and *Bite-sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for the Overworked Librarian* by Nancy Dowd, both of which provide practical tips and strategies to guide library marketing efforts. Dowd makes the insightful observation that “Marketing goes beyond trying to get people to use your library; it is a concerted effort to articulate your value” (1). This quote reveals how marketing aligns with storytelling and underscores the importance of crafting a thoughtful, concise, and compelling marketing message that is relevant, memorable, and captures the attention of the intended audience.

The library marketing literature suggests that word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) is one of the most powerful channels for delivering a marketing message. WOMM is a simple but effective vehicle for telling the library’s story. Barber argues, “There is no more powerful communication technique than the simple act of one person talking to another” (7). The idea is that people are more likely to buy a product or service when a person who tells them about it endorses it. She makes the case that in a world where people are bombarded with thousands of advertisements on a daily basis, the most

meaningful recommendations come from the people we know. Barber outlines five components that make this technique so powerful: WOMM is immediate, personal (“not a pitch”), honest (“There’s no commission, no connection. You’re more likely to believe”), attention-grabbing (“People love to share a good idea or experience, and other people love to listen”) and customer-driven (“not imposed”) (9).

Dowd echoes Barber’s sentiments in her discussion of WOMM, explaining that “word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) centers on the concept that 10 percent of the population influences the behavior of the other 90 percent. To create a successful WOMM campaign, we just have to get those influencers on board, give them the proper information, and provide the tools to help them share that information. Then they’ll spread our message to everyone else...” (3). In other words, the challenge for libraries is to influence the influencers. Yet relying on others to articulate the library’s value is risky since the librarian has less control over the interaction. Dowd admits that “for many librarians, the idea that people would choose to listen to a nonauthoritative source goes against the fundamental belief that people need experts as guides” (4). However, she points out that WOMM is worthwhile due to the power of personal recommendations. The very lack of authority this marketing method entails may concern some librarians but is the key to its effectiveness—when a library user cites their personal experiences to praise the library, the endorsement is perceived as genuine, reliable, and trustworthy. It carries more weight than when an institutional representative does so, because of the representative’s inherent bias.

Ned Potter devotes a chapter of his 2012 book *The Library Marketing Toolkit* to how libraries can collaborate with community members. He begins this chapter by

extolling the virtues of WOMM, which he calls “one of the single most important techniques in marketing libraries today” (139). A major benefit of WOMM is that it extends the reach of the library’s marketing efforts:

WOMM is simply one or more people telling others about a product, service, institution or brand. In effect, it is the process of letting others market on your behalf... A certain amount of WOMM will happen without any intervention from the library: people talk to each other about good and bad experiences all the time. The aim here is to harness this as a marketing tool, and exert some kind of influence on the content of the messages going out, how they’re disseminated, and who hears them. (Potter 139-140)

Workloads and schedules prevent librarians from being present for library tours and other functions, so allowing and enabling others to advocate on the library’s behalf helps spread the word while saving the librarian’s time. However, a totally hands-off approach leaves much to chance; as Potter notes, librarians can ideally leverage WOMM’s unique affordances to their advantage through thoughtful intervention.

2.2 Libraries and the college admissions process

From the prospective student perspective, popular sources explicitly mention the library as a factor in the college search process. A 2010 article published by *U.S. News & World Report* claims that “If you talk to a college admissions officer or a high school guidance counselor about things to do when you visit a college campus, one of the first things they say is to visit the libraries on campus” (Greer). Greer quotes from interviews with academic librarians to build a case for the library’s value as an academic resource as well as a space for study and socialization. The article provides a thorough overview of what libraries can offer students and encourages prospective students to investigate: (1) the helpfulness and availability of library staff, (2) the relationship between librarians and faculty in collaborating on course content and assignments, (3) the library atmosphere,

and (4) the library's website and digital resources. Greer attributes a significant portion of students' academic success to library support and concludes by urging prospective students to evaluate them thoughtfully: "After all, libraries and their services are a major part of your college experience, and making sure that you can use them to your advantage should be among the top factors on your list for picking a school."

The College Board's 2012 publication *Campus Visits & College Interviews* mentions students' use of the library (in terms of how crowded the library is and the amount of time students spend there) as an indicator of a school's academic rigor. It suggests students ask a wide range of questions about the library, covering many facets such as: whether the staff are courteous and helpful, the library's hours, study spaces, checking whether the stacks are open or closed via the library catalog, availability of computers, whether IT is up to date, the physical conditions of the library and types of spaces, whether there is a place to purchase food, whether the library provides a good place for study and research, etc. (56). It even encourages students to find out if there are departmental or branch libraries and special collections that are open to students, if the library offers current periodicals, and whether books by faculty are on display (Schneider 56).

Prospective students tend to be an overlooked audience for academic libraries, which understandably focus their marketing efforts on their primary audience of enrolled students. However, the literature suggests that libraries could benefit by partnering with college Admissions departments to recruit students. Emmett Lombard's study of "The Role of the Academic Library in College Choice," published in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* in 2012, explored the extent to which academic libraries factor into

prospective student college choice, and the implications for the relationship between the library and the admissions department. The study involved surveying students about whether the library influenced their college choice and interviewing admissions professionals about how libraries and admissions departments can work together to further their institutional missions. Lombard found that for those surveyed, the library typically did not impact college choice, but for some the library was important to their success while in college. Lombard notes that more than half of the survey comments related to student retention, leading him to conclude that “most academic Library missions relate to retention, not recruitment” (240).

One admissions officer interviewed by Lombard suggested that a library liaison would be better qualified to impart library information than admissions personnel (239). Lombard suggests that a library liaison model would benefit those who do rank the library as a factor in their college selection process, noting that “tour guides may be intelligent and personable, but sometimes lack enthusiasm for and knowledge of the Library” (240). However, this model is not always feasible for busy librarians on campuses where admissions tours are held frequently, as Maggie Gallup Kopp of Brigham Young University explains in her case study titled “Academic libraries, institutional missions, and new student recruitment.” Her university’s main academic library is highlighted on admissions campus tours “but with so many visitors each year it is impossible for the library to personally engage with every prospective student” (195). She summarizes the tours this way: “Campus tours pass by the Lee Library and guides briefly mention a few facts about the library, including unique items in library collections, or tout the Lee Library’s place as one of the top 20 college libraries in the

2013 Princeton Review rankings... On most guided campus tours, though, prospective students will not set foot in the library” (195).

Citing Lombard, Gallup Kopp speculates that “The academic library's relative absence in marketing to prospective students... might be one reason students report that the library is a minor consideration in choosing a college, if any” (194). She notes the focus of marketing materials for prospective students is often limited to the library building. “The library's place in tours and brochures is meant to signify to prospective students that the school is an academic institution... but typically, no mention is made of the library's unique holdings and services, or of how the library supports academics and the intellectual life of the campus” (194). Gallup Kopp makes a compelling argument in favor of developing a relationship between the library and the admissions office in order to collaborate to recruit students:

For the academic library, partnering with admissions offices can be a mutually beneficial activity. Libraries expend a great deal of effort in trying to market collections and services to current students and faculty within the campus community. So why ignore prospective students, who make up an important part of an institution's external audience, and who may become members of a school's internal constituencies in just a year or so? In working with campus admissions offices to market the overall college or university, academic libraries can further existing outreach activities and better engage incoming students, building awareness of the library and its services even before they join the student body. Sending students messages about the library early in their relationship with their college of choice could also increase their familiarity and comfort level with library services and staff members. (194)

Rather than improving tour guide training, her case study focuses on an initiative to highlight special collections library materials on the tours while talking about the mission and environment of the university. However, she makes a strong case for connecting the library and university's institutional missions when marketing the library to prospective students with her assertion that “The library serves as a vehicle to talk about the academic

life of the institution... Its resources represent such aspects of a school's institutional mission as its responsibility to support teaching and research, its aspirations to academic excellence, and its commitment to student achievement” (194).

Campus tours have received some specific attention in the library literature.

Lindsay Miller’s 2012 article in *College & Research Libraries News*, “The library and the campus visit: Communicating value to prospective students and parents,” discusses campus tours as an important marketing tool in which prospective students are exposed to the library for the first time. Noting pressures on admissions departments to recruit students in an increasingly competitive environment and the powerful sway a campus tour can have in a student’s decision to apply to a school, she sees an opportunity for librarians to aid admissions professionals in marketing the college to prospective students. Miller puts forth a call to action for academic librarians to get involved in the admissions process at their institutions:

“...we must articulate and promote the role of the library in a student’s college career, even before a student enrolls. We need to re-center ourselves as the “heart of the university” and demonstrate the value and impact that we can have to administrators, faculty, and student affairs and admission staff. We can play a part in enrollment and recruitment by promoting our academic contributions to prospective families and being better engaged in the campus visit.” (586)

In her estimation, mention of the library on campus tours is typically absent: “A student’s decision to enroll may be slightly influenced by facilities like the library or the academic feeling they represent, but at many institutions, the library gets a fleeting mention at prospective student events. As far as the campus tour, it may include a quick stop into the library lobby, and a few mentions about numbers of books and a few services. Is that enough?” (586).

In recent years admissions departments have reexamined campus visits and student-led campus tours due to their significant impact on application and enrollment decisions. Miller uses Miami University as a representative example of a shift in the style of campus tours from a recitation of scripted, dull facts and figures to a dynamic, engaging tour that highlights students' personal stories and experiences. The authenticity offered by student stories translates into a more personal connection for the prospective student. At her institution, Miller sought out opportunities to educate admissions staff and student tour guides about the libraries and their value to the campus community. Beyond the basic information on hours, services, and facilities, she suggests librarians supply admissions ambassadors with student anecdotes and stories. She posits some valuable advice for student tour guide outreach to encourage students to present the library in a positive light, without sacrificing the student-centered and authentic tour experience:

Connect with the student tour guides and get to know the tour guide advisor.

I also asked for the tour guide script, and updated it with the newest and most important information about the impact we can make. If your campus is as big on storytelling as mine is, give the students ideas of stories they can use. You may find their anecdotes about literally camping out at the library or the fact that they only come in during their tour guide shift less than appealing. Supply your student tour guide with good stories if they don't have them.

Give constant updates. I attend student tour guide staff meetings once a semester to give them big updates and changes to hours. It's a chance to praise them for what they are doing right and make corrections. Also, if I hear something incorrect or unflattering about the libraries, I immediately e-mail the tour guide advisor.

Share real stories about the library. If you do have a chance to talk one-on-one with students, tell stories about how the library has impacted other students and how the library makes things easier. I like to give the students the inside scoop on the best places to study and how the library culturally fits in on campus.

Overall, Miller's approach involves placing the library at the center of the university's mission and articulating a narrative of how the library fits into the academic culture and

supports student academic success. Clear, consistent, and frequent communication between the library and admissions staff ensures that prospective students receive correct, relevant, and interesting information about the library, which in turn supports student enrollment and recruitment initiatives.

3 Methodology

This paper investigates the following research questions regarding admissions campus tours at UNC-Chapel Hill:

- Which libraries do guides present or mention on the tour?
- What aspects of the libraries do they discuss (i.e. collections, physical spaces, staff, etc.)?
- Do guides ‘spin’ the library as a positive place?
- Do they include information that the library considers appropriate and relevant for the audience of prospective students?
- Do the tours provide an accurate overview of the library buildings, policies, and services?
- What are librarians’ experiences with the tours and what information would they ideally like the guides to communicate?

A qualitative approach involving observation, interviews, and content analysis was used to collect data for this study. A qualitative methodology is best suited to this study due to the nature of the research questions, which seek to understand the human factors involved in the communication process that occurs during campus tours.

Observation is a fundamental method of collecting research data that “entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting” (Marshall and Rossman 139). The researcher must be focused and carefully record their observations through written notes or audio recordings. Observation is a useful methodology for examining interactions in social settings, allowing researchers to gain insights by capturing both what subjects say and how they say it. “At its best, direct

observation through on-site recording results in the accurate, unobtrusive, and continuous collection of data” (Maxim 285). This method allows a researcher direct access to real, observed behaviors rather than relying on participants to accurately report their perceptions or interpretations of an event. In short, researchers observe behavior to see what people actually do, which may be different from what they say they do.

Specifically, participant observation was used in this study to collect data about the behaviors of student tour guides leading admissions tours for prospective students. In participant observation, the researcher immerses themselves in the study setting as both an observer and a participant, allowing the researcher to gain insights firsthand (Marshall and Rossman 140). I observed several admissions tours, each led by a different tour guide, in the Spring 2017 semester to see what the guides said about the libraries during the tours. During each tour slot a few guides were available to lead tours, and I was able to select any guide leading a tour during that time. I selected tours to include a balance of guides based on perceived gender, class year, and major. Observing several tours ensured that I experienced different tour styles and a variety of perspectives on the library.

The study was designed so that the extent of my participation as the researcher was minimal. One challenge observation presents for the researcher is “the difficulty of managing a relatively unobtrusive role” (Marshall and Rossman 139). The tours I observed were regularly scheduled admissions tours for prospective students, which are held daily throughout the week. I coordinated with admissions staff to join the tours as a participant, making myself as unobtrusive as possible to have a minimum impact on the guides’ natural performance. I also avoided unnecessary interaction with the guide and other tour-goers. Since tours tend to be large, I easily blended in as part of the audience. I

recorded my observations using an audio recording application on my smartphone.

Recording this way was unobtrusive since it is common practice, especially for young people such as myself, to openly carry cell phones. During the tour, I also took notes on my smartphone of any visual observations relating to the presentation of the libraries.

In a study of this nature, it is essential to capture the tour guides' candid remarks about the libraries. When it comes to observational studies, "the biggest danger is that observed people change their behavior because of the presence of the observer," a phenomenon known as the Hawthorne effect (Wildemuth 193). In order to achieve the study goals, it was necessary to record the tour guides' speech about the libraries without notifying them about the observation. Revealing the purpose of my study and making the guides aware that they are being monitored would inevitably disrupt their typical speech. This approach is critical to prevent a Hawthorne effect.

The audio recordings were transcribed word-for-word and the transcriptions analyzed through qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is "the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics" (Neuendorf 1). Qualitative content analysis "allows themes to emerge from the data throughout the process of analysis: the coding framework is continually shaped by emerging information" (Spurgen and Wildemuth 298). A qualitative content analysis is appropriate for this study because the content of the transcriptions reveals topics and themes about the library's offerings as they are communicated on the tours. Tour guides' tone of voice and the use of emotionally charged language were also noted as indicators of emotions, attitudes, and personal perceptions of the library.

Observations alone were not enough to uncover the reasons behind the participants' behaviors. For this reason, I interviewed two admissions staff members to ask about how the library content on the tours is developed, and how the guides are trained to speak about the libraries. I also conducted semi-structured interviews of librarians who work at the three libraries featured on the tours, as well as a library administrator, to ask what information the UNC Libraries would ideally like to be communicated on the tours. This information contributed my body of knowledge about the tour process and library communications.

4 Findings

4.1 From the tour guides' perspective

Using qualitative content analysis to analyze the data, the following topics and themes emerged from the information that the tour guides presented about the libraries.

4.1.1 Library System

The network of libraries in the UNC Library system, including specialized branch libraries.

The UNC-Chapel Hill Library system is composed of ten libraries. The three main libraries are considered to be Walter Royal Davis Library (the largest library on campus, known commonly as Davis Library), the R.B. House Undergraduate Library (called the UL for short), and the Wilson Special Collections Library (home to five special collections including the University Archives and Records Management Services, known as Wilson Library). In addition, there are seven branch libraries which focus on a particular department or area of study. These include: Sloane Art Library, Joseph Palmer Knapp (Government) Library, Katherine R. Everett Law Library, Music Library (located on the bottom floor of Wilson Library), Kenan Science Library, and Stone Center Library (which gathers works on the African American experience and the African Diaspora). There are two additional libraries which are not technically part of the UNC Chapel Hill Libraries system, but are located on UNC's campus. These are the Health Sciences Library and the Park (Media & Journalism) Library.

One tour guide said that there were only three libraries on campus, referring to the main libraries of Davis, Wilson, and the UL, which are the three most commonly discussed on the tours. On the opposite end of the spectrum, another guide stated that there were 17 libraries on campus, which is too many! Several guides directly addressed the misconception that there are only three libraries on campus:

“People always ask me, ‘Are these the only three libraries?’ Absolutely not. They’re just the ones that are in the center of campus.”

“There’s also the Kenan Science Library... I mentioned those three libraries aren’t our only ones, but ones more spread out are kind of more specific to different majors. We do have a science library, we have a law library, a health sciences library. So all different things. Maybe if you need a more specific book for a specific essay or class, you might want to look there.”

The Kenan Science Library and the Music Library received the most mentions out of the branch libraries. This is likely because the tours stop near both of these locations as part of a new tour route. The Health Sciences Library was mentioned a couple of times, and the law and media and journalism libraries were each mentioned once. With the number of libraries in the UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries system, it is not reasonable to expect a tour guide to be an expert on each one or to remember them all. The focus should be on the three main libraries in the central part of campus: Davis Library, the Undergraduate Library, and Wilson Library. However, guides should be aware that there are more than the three main libraries and convey that other libraries exist, perhaps giving a few examples.

4.1.2 Interlibrary loan (ILL)

The lending system by which a library can borrow materials from other libraries.

Surprisingly, many of the tour guides made a point of highlighting the interlibrary loan system, and seemed especially proud of this service. (As it turns out, interlibrary

loan is included on the Tour Guide Fact Sheet training document, which explains why this was a popular talking point.) Most commonly, guides emphasized the convenience of students being able to obtain any material they might need for their research. As one guide said, “If you need a book for a class, it’s here. And if it’s not, we can get it. What that means is we have interlibrary loan... I’ve been doing a lot of research papers as a humanities-based student so that’s very helpful for me.”

Another guide’s terminology demonstrates that there may be some confusion about what interlibrary loan is, versus digital resources available through the library website.

“The digital library and archives are really great because you can have all these documents. They already have them in the computer system and with your UNC ID you can request documents and get them sent to you really easily. If we don’t have it here at Carolina, you can have them sent to you from our interlibrary loan system which comprises the entire UNC system—so UNC Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Greensboro, as well as Duke, NC State, and NCCU. Which is like a whole bunch of documents.”

It sounds like this guide is describing an ILL request in reference to “the digital library and archives” when in fact, digital collections and digital archives are distinct from document delivery and ILL requests. It is great to share that the UNC Libraries provide a lot of digital content and electronic resources, but it should be phrased in another way that does not confuse two separate services.

Here is another description of the interlibrary loan system:

“We have the third-biggest library system in the nation. Second only to the Library of Congress and the Ivy League Library, and that’s because we have the pleasure of sharing a library system with a couple other schools in North Carolina. We share with Duke, State, and NC Central, which means there’s an interloaning system. So if you ever need a book and you can’t find it in one of our many, many libraries here, you can loan it from there and they’ll bring it to a library here and then you can use it. Which is a super awesome resource, I mean like having the

third biggest library system's pretty cool cause you can get whatever book you need, I would assume."

The assertion that UNC has the third-largest library system, while clearly a point of pride for the guides, is unfortunately incorrect. That comment is listed as a fact in the training guide but its source is unclear. Data points such as this, ranking UNC highly among other schools, appear frequently during tours, as guides regularly use superlatives to present UNC as exceptional, but it would be more accurate to say that UNC has one of the largest library systems in the Southeast in terms of the number of materials in its collections.

This quotation also conflates interlibrary borrowing with the Triangle Research Libraries Network (TRLN), which is a collaborative organization comprising Duke University, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina State University, and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a consortium, its goal is to efficiently share resources among member libraries. Search TRLN is a website that provides a single search interface to the TRLN Libraries' Collections, allowing patrons of TRLN institutions to request document delivery of materials from other TRLN libraries. These requests are handled by the interlibrary loan offices at each campus. However, if a local TRLN institution does not have the resource, the item will be requested from another library that is not involved in the consortium. While the guides emphasized the TRLN member institutions, they are not the only places from which UNC borrows materials. ILL requests may be filled by libraries anywhere in the country, and sometimes across the globe, including public, academic, and other types of libraries.

While the guides did not explain this confusing system exactly right, they did positively convey the benefits of resource sharing and how that improves the accessibility of materials for UNC students. "We have this big system where we share resources

through all of them [TRLN libraries]. So we have a lot of really great options for resources both for classes and to do undergraduate research... you've got a lot of options to pull sources from." Another guide gave a specific, personal example: "I've had friends who have gotten things emailed to them from Duke or NC State for projects, which is really awesome and really convenient."

4.1.3 Space

Library layout, size, and functionality of different spaces.

Many of the guides discussed the size of the libraries in terms of number of floors, specifically that the UL has three, and Davis has eight. At Davis, "Each floor is a study floor, which means that there's tons of rows of books, but there's also so much room for students to study." While this means that Davis Library provides plenty of study space, it can also seem gargantuan and overwhelming. One of the guides' comments seems fairly straightforward ("That is Davis Library. Alright, so Davis Library. There are eight floors.") but by taking a deep breath and using a certain tone of voice, it was clear that this person was intimidated by the size of the library. (Another guide echoed this sentiment in a more lighthearted way by jokingly referring to Davis as their "favorite eight floor monstrosity.") This guide also discussed how the noise level decreases as the floors increase, and expressed a preference for the more relaxed and social atmosphere on the first two levels: "They say, although I have not tried this, that on the eighth floor it is so quiet that if you drop a pin, everyone's going to hear it. Everyone's going to know. I don't like studying in that kind of situation, so I go to the first floor or second floor of Davis."

4.1.4 Personal attachment

Personal stories about using the library.

In discussing the libraries, many of the guides talked about which library they preferred to use, or claimed a certain study space as their favorite. Among the guides observed, Davis was the top favorite. One guide jokingly called this library his “favorite eight floor monstrosity” because he spends “a little too much time there.” Nevertheless, he still says “but I love it anyways,” in keeping with his upbeat, positive presentation style. This quotation reveals the tension between students’ attachment to a particular library and their negative feelings about spending a lot of time studying. Another student mentioned that specific furniture in the UL fit his method of studying: “The Undergraduate Library or we call it the UL is right here right behind us. That’s where I personally like to study. It’s got a lot of really big tables that you can lay out all your work on and it’s open 24/7 which is really convenient.” In describing the difference in atmosphere between Davis and the UL, one guide said, “if you like the cozy setting, if that’s your thing, then the UL is definitely the place for you,” conveying that there is a library that fits different personal preferences, and that students tend to take ownership of a particular library when they discover which is their favorite. His use of the phrase “the place for you” is an important marketing technique that invites prospective students to picture themselves in the space and claim a library as their own.

One guide emphasized that even specific branch libraries are open to all students, and you do not have to be studying a particular discipline in order to use them. “It’s the Kenan Science Library but it’s really open to everybody. I have friends who are arts majors who come with me to that library.” This personal example highlights that all students are welcome to use the library, as well as the social aspect of going to the library

with friends. This sentiment was echoed by another guide. At the conclusion of all of the tours, each guide tells their “Why Carolina” story explaining why they chose to come to UNC and what they love about the university. These stories are a memorable and compelling way to end the tours. One guide talked about how UNC students are the kind of people who always help each other out, rather than stepping over each other in an effort to compete. They talked about how they “found friends here who will stay up with me until 3am in the library.” This comment was a genuine and heartwarming example of the community and camaraderie among UNC students who are dedicated to their academic work while still supporting and spending time with each other. It is a positive thing for the library to be seen as a space for groups of students to study together in solidarity. Even though the thought of late nights in the library is not particularly enticing for a prospective student, it is a reality of college life at an academically rigorous institution and helps to reassure prospective students that UNC’s libraries have spaces and people to support them.

4.1.5 Materials and collections

Quality, usefulness, condition, format, and availability of library resources.

During one of the tours, a prospective student expressed concern about whether the library would have all of the textbooks he would need.

Prospective student: “Do they [the libraries] have all the textbooks you need or do you need to buy textbooks?”

Tour guide: “All of your textbooks are going to come from Student Stores. All of the books in here [gestures to the library] you’re going to use if you’ve got a paper to write and you need to do research on it. If you want to learn more about a specific topic, you’re going to go there. All of your textbooks you’re going to order there [from Student Stores].”

Prospective student: “So they [the libraries] don’t have the same books you need?”

Tour guide: “Generally speaking, no. Some maybe, but most of the textbooks that your professors are going to want you to have are new and most of the books in our libraries are pretty old.”

It is unfortunate that the guide’s comment portrays the library’s collections as old and outdated. This question would have been a good opportunity to talk about the fact that some textbooks are available via the library’s course reserve system, which makes textbooks and other course materials available for a limited checkout time. Since textbooks are often expensive, their availability via the library is a legitimate concern, especially for students worried about the affordability of college.

Following the theme of library materials being perceived as old, one student described the Music Library as having “a lot of really old sheet music,” when in fact, the library also collects popular scores and music recordings, and the sheet music collection is just a small part of the collection. The tour guides did not delve into detail about the collection offerings at Wilson Library, likely because that library contains five different special collections, which may be too much to expect a tour guide to keep straight. One of the guides did mention an interesting object in the North Carolina Collection Gallery: a replica of the death mask of Napoleon. It would be helpful to train guides on what special collections and archives are, and to provide specific examples of interesting items, since they are very different from other types of libraries.

One guide did mention that Wilson Library has “a bunch of different collections that students can use.” Not only did he acknowledge that there are many collections within Wilson, but more importantly he stated that the collections are available for student use. Sometimes students perpetuate a misconception that only graduate students,

faculty, or other “serious” researchers can use the materials in Wilson, so it was wonderful to hear this guide clarify that all students have access to them.

4.1.6 Student rituals and traditions

Stories about rituals and traditions associated with the library.

On a typical college campus, the phrase ‘Walk of Shame’ conjures up images of an early-morning walk home after a night of revelry. But at UNC, this student tradition has a unique connotation

“Funny story about Davis Library. This was my life on Thursday night. There is something called a walk of shame that is associated with Davis Library. Davis is closed at 2am and if you’re like me and you’re nocturnal, that means nothing to you.... We have what is called the Undergraduate Library, we call it the UL for short, and the Walk of Shame is students walking from Davis which closes at 2am, to the UL which is open 24 hours, as I experienced Thursday evening. At 2am they walk across in this big mass. No one’s happy. Nobody’s happy about that. [audience chuckling] Everybody’s solemn, probably the saddest moment of their week, perhaps their month.

Don’t procrastinate is the moral of the story. Thursday night I had a paper due at 10am on Friday morning. I had a month to do it.... but I waited until the last second. And so guess what? I earned an entire evening in the UL. It was horrible. Don’t do that. Don’t be like me. That’s the goal. So, that’s the Walk of Shame if you ever hear anybody talking about it. That’s a great story, great to watch if you’re ever walking around that late.”

The tour audience laughed at this story, which was delivered in a self-deprecating and humorous manner with a clear intention to entertain and play to the audience’s sympathy. Yet underlying this funny story is a message to prospective students about the need to develop good time-management skills, or face the consequences of late nights of studying in the library. This guide had previously introduced Davis Library by associating it with the virtues of productivity and studiousness:

“Davis has eight floors. Each floor is a study floor, which means that there’s tons of rows of books, but there’s also so much room for students to study. That’s why you’ll see a ton of students in there all day studying. I saw some on the first day

of classes studying and I just couldn't help but think to myself 'Why can't I be like them?' So you'll see students there all the time, if you ever think you're not, on a Friday night you're going to see some students in there I promise."

On the one hand, it is positive that students heavily use the library, but the implication for prospective students can result in the impression that UNC students are stressed and overworked.

Another tour group briefly walked into Davis Library, upon which a prospective student noticed the sign that says Davis closes at 2am. He asked the guide "How many people are often still in there [at 2am], realistically?" This question reveals that the prospective student is trying to get a sense for the academic workload and time spent studying in college, and is understandably alarmed at the prospect of spending many nights in the library until the early morning. In response to this question, the guide explained that the number of people who stay in the library until closing depends on the time of the semester (Midterms means more students studying later) and that people do have the option to do the Walk of Shame to Davis if they need to keep studying. Ultimately, it depends on an individual's study habits, "but a decent amount of people do stay here late which is why they offer to have the libraries open so late." This interaction is also important because it underscores that the library is responsive to students' needs, setting policies for hours that accommodate students' need to study any time of the day.

4.1.7 History and legends

Stories about the library relating to the University's history and legends.

"I want to tell a little funny story. There is a big naming discrepancy over Wilson Library, between the Wilson family and the Morehead family. Obviously, the Wilson family won—that is the name that is inscribed in the stone. But the Morehead family was not too stoked about that, so they actually built the Bell Tower directly behind Wilson Library, in that proximity, to make it look like

there's a dunce cap on Wilson Library. So that's a little joke our founding families played on each other."

History and legends is one of the four overarching themes emphasized by the Admissions office on the campus tours. Many stories about the University are passed down over generations, and have become part of a collective trove of UNC trivia that foster a sense of attachment to the University and pride in its history and enduring institutions. Wilson Library, the oldest library on campus, is fittingly included in the University's lore. I heard several variations of the Wilson-Morehead rivalry story, and each time the tale received an appreciative chuckle from the audience. Legends are great storytelling opportunities on campus tours because they are memorable and make people feel connected to a place.

4.1.8 Accessibility (of building)

Library hours of operation, convenience, transportation, and safety.

Tour guides were appreciative that the libraries are open late, and with the UL open 24/7 most days, it is convenient to use the library whenever the need arises. The library's policy of extended hours demonstrates that it is responsive to students' study habits. One of the guides also emphasized safety and transportation in connection to the late hours, using it as an opportunity to talk about the bus transit system and late-night shuttle, as well as the campus SafeWalk service that provides students with a way to get home safely after a late-night study session.

"The P2P is the nighttime safety shuttle here at UNC. It runs every single night from 7pm until 4am. We have this so that way students can get back home safely no matter where they are, or what the weather is like. It makes a giant loop of campus to every housing quad, it stops a few times on Franklin Street, and at all of the libraries. So if you're out late getting cheese fries at Sup Dogs, or you're up late studying for your exam at Davis Library, you can always make sure that you

can get back safely no matter what.”

“Our libraries are open pretty late. Davis Library is open every day from 7am to 2am and the UL is open 24 hours. Since our libraries are open pretty late, we have a great program here at Carolina called SafeWalk, where you walk down to the information desk for whatever library you’re in, you ask for a SafeWalk, and you’ll get a male and female student to walk back with you to your residence hall or your apartment, wherever you’re living, and either they’ll walk or bike back with you so that way you can get home safe, buddy system... You can usually request one of those from 7pm all the way through the night so that’s really great we have that here.”

Safety while at college is a concern, so talking about late-night transportation and SafeWalk services are a way for a guide to reassure prospective students (and perhaps more importantly, their parents) that systems are in place to ensure that students do not have to walk home late at night. The library is seen as a trustworthy place that actively helps facilitate student safety by stationing SafeWalkers in the building, and is also portrayed as being an integral part of student life and a student’s daily routine.

4.1.9 Atmosphere

Social dynamics within the library space, and characteristics used to describe the atmosphere of each of the libraries.

A number of things contribute to the unique atmosphere of a library: its architecture and spaces, how people behave in the space, whether it is best suited to individual or collaborative work, the noise level. These converging factors influence a student’s emotions, attitudes, and perceptions of the library. In this category, most of the guides focused on how they feel in a given space.

Several guides described Wilson as a counterpart to the famous Hogwarts library in the *Harry Potter* movies.

“Wilson Library is that library at UNC, I feel like all colleges have one, that looks like Hogwarts on the inside.”

“This one always kind of reminds me of *Harry Potter*. Like you see those scenes where they’re studying in *Harry Potter* and there are the big long tables—that’s what Wilson looks like.”

With its grand reading room and stately façade featuring regal columns, imposing steps, and a domed roof, Wilson Library is an impressive building and a focal point of one of the campuses’ main quads. Guides seem proud of the building and its beauty (“it’s really great for Instagram pictures”) but their comments reveal that they see the space as more of a showpiece than somewhere they would actually go to study. As one of the librarians points out, this mindset even relates to the *Harry Potter* comparison, “which I don’t think is negative—everybody loves *Harry Potter*—but I think it paints us in a particular light... it’s just that they set it up as like a stage set, like this is just a library that you *look* at and appreciate how unusual it is, but it’s not actually something that you can benefit from, or something that has materials that can fascinate or delight you or support your research.”

On a positive note, several of the guides encouraged the tour group to explore Wilson after the tour: “It’s arguably the nicest interior of any building at Carolina, so if you get a chance, get in there and check it out before you leave.” However, the guides were also less able to articulate Wilson Library’s purpose and why students might use it. Mostly the guides focused on how quiet this library is as a study environment, which they usually avoid due to fear of judgment if they accidentally make a noise and risk the ire of fellow students. Comments such as “you literally can hear a pin drop” and “I always get self-conscious if I sneeze and it just echoes for days in there” demonstrate how the social dynamics of the library, and the way that people enforce the noise level within a certain space, play into students’ perceptions of whether they feel comfortable in the space.

Another guide said “I’m not going to lie to you, Wilson’s beautiful but I don’t really like studying there. It’s a little bit intimidating. It’s almost silent all the time.”

However, as the guides point out, different spaces are conducive to different types of activities, and there are a variety of study environments available in different libraries and even on different floors within the same library. Studying for class might be done in Davis Library, but studying for an important exam may require a silent study space for maximum focus. “I don’t go in there [Wilson Library] a lot, but when I was studying for the MCATs and I was doing my practice tests, I would go in there since it’s super quiet so you minimize distractions.”

In contrast to Wilson, one guide described the UL as having a “cozy setting,” though he reported a preference for working in Davis, which is “a little bit more set for really buckling down and getting after it.” The UL has a reputation as being a louder library with a social atmosphere—a place where you can study in groups and run into your friends. However, students who need to hunker down and be productive may prefer to go to Davis, where there is a greater chance of anonymity and more spaces to squirrel yourself away for an intense study session.

Overall, these comments repeatedly present the libraries primarily as quiet spaces for studying. The focus is not on research, or even necessarily about using the resources. The message is that the library is a place to study for your tests and classes. On one level, studying in the library is probably what prospective students can most readily envision themselves doing. However, more attention could be given to how the library supports research beyond physical spaces to work.

4.1.10 Technology

Technology services and support available through the libraries.

The UNC-Chapel Hill Library system provides technology and tech support including access to computers, printing, a media and design lab in the UL with access to the Adobe software suite, makerspaces and 3D printers, and audio and video equipment and editing software. The guides did not cover much of this information on the tours. One guide pointed out an office suite on the basement level of Wilson Library and said that they received help with downloading software for class there. However, that office suite is actually for the library's internal software development department, and is not a public service point. The guide may have confused it with the basement level of the UL, which houses UNC's Information Technology Services (ITS), as another guide pointed out in a story about getting a laptop fixed. This situation highlights how tour guides gather information based on cues from the surrounding environment. The sign on the door to the library's software development office in Wilson is intended for an internal audience and thus is not clear signage for a tour guide who may easily assume it is a branch of ITS.

Most of the guides talked about makerspaces when they showed off one of the Be a Maker (BeaM) space located near the science building. BeaM is a network of makerspaces across UNC's campus, of which some of the libraries are a part, but the guides did not explicitly mention this. One tour guide pointed out the UL's makerspace resources, particularly referencing 3D printing: "The UL has a software acquisition department which does things like 3D print Old Wells. So really anybody has access to it, and it is really cool not just because I'm building a 3D printed hand this semester for one of my classes, but you can build things like the Old Well. You really can use 3D printing for everything and I think it's super awesome we have this free resource here for all

students.” The Old Well is an iconic structure associated with the University, which makes it a fun example of the creative possibilities for 3D printed objects. At the same time, the guide showed that 3D printing supports academic work by giving the example of how they created a prosthetic hand in their bioengineering class to solve a real-life problem. This is an excellent example of how the library’s services support classroom teaching and learning, as well as personal learning and experimentation.

4.1.11 Research

The library’s role in facilitating undergraduate research.

Typically, tour guides talk about opportunities for undergraduate research at a separate tour stop from the libraries. However, several of the guides’ comments place the libraries within the network of support for undergraduate research at UNC. One guide emphasized how the interlibrary loan system allows for access to any materials needed for research: “We have a lot of really great options for resources both for classes and to do undergraduate research... you’ve got a lot of options to pull sources from.”

Comparing textbooks purchased via the Student Stores to library books, another guide said, “All of the books in here [the library] you’re going to use if you’ve got a paper to write and you need to do research on it, if you want to learn more about a specific topic.” Surprisingly, this was one of the only times a guide mentioned the library in connection to the research process, which is a core aspect of the library’s mission.

One guide talked about an article in the student newspaper featuring a student who discovered poems and conducted original research in Wilson Library.

“I just read an article in the *Daily Tar Heel* about a student who was doing a project for her English class here at Carolina and was looking through the archives for stuff, and she ended up discovering two poems. Which is really cool that she got kind of famous for, and got written about for, just doing stuff for a

class at UNC and using the resources available within the libraries, which is really awesome.”

This is an excellent story for the guide to share about the excitement of discovering materials in the library’s collection and the opportunity for undergraduate students to conduct original research. It also reveals that reading the student newspaper is one way that at least some guides build their knowledge base, and it is important for the library to be regularly included in university news and media outlets.

4.2 From the librarians’ perspective

Conversations with a library administrator and librarians at the three main campus libraries provided insights about the interaction between the Library and the Admissions department, and their own recent experiences with Admissions tours. A decade ago, one of the librarians reached out to Admissions and provided them with documentation to include in the tour script, although the librarian never heard a guide reference this content. The Library is not currently in communication with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions about providing content or training about the libraries for tour guides.

One of the librarians pointed out that cultivating a personalized tour experience is a specific strategy that naturally leads to variation in how guides present the campus on their tours. “It’s always my understanding that guides are encouraged to share a very personal reflection about their experience on the university campus, which is itself a marketing decision. They want real people to represent the campus. What that means is that there is definitely a variety of things that you can hear.” Librarians have overheard guides talking about a library that they especially like, which is in keeping with the personalized style of the tours. Guides’ commentary on the libraries is typically

innocuous and positive. Yet one librarian notes a discrepancy between the guides' supportive tone of voice and their actual speech about the libraries. "You definitely get a sense of affection from them. Their tone of voice when they're talking about the Library is positive, but the actual content they're conveying is not always what I think we want them to convey." An example of this from one of the tours observed was when a guide told a humorous story about spending all night in the UL; his joking and engaging tale belied his words of resentment at having earned a "horrible" late night in the library because of procrastination.

The librarians recalled having heard guides say things like, "This is Wilson Library. It's like a museum. You don't need to go in there," or "This is Davis Library, it's scary and big," or "This is the Undergraduate Library. It's open 24 hours, but it's really loud. The only thing you need there is the computer repair center." These types of comments are the opposite of what the Library wants to convey to prospective students. Librarians said they would not want prospective students to be told that "you don't have to go there," or "there's nothing in here for you," or "it's just old stuff." According to the librarians interviewed, these kinds of false or negative comments have been on the decline in recent years but are not entirely unheard of. Overall, the guides' comments reflected perceptions, and sometimes misperceptions, about the libraries that the librarians are familiar with.

4.2.1 Talking points to prioritize

A revision process underway at the Office of Undergraduate Admissions offers a prime opportunity for the Libraries to establish communication with the Admissions office and provide the tour guides with updated information. The below topics emerged

from talking to library staff about what they would ideally like the tour guides to communicate about the libraries.

The libraries are spaces that are open for you to explore, to use, and to study in.

Prospective students should know that they are welcome to take advantage of all that the libraries have to offer. Guides can explain that there is a network of libraries that serve different purposes depending on what students are working on. A student's major or status as an undergraduate does not limit their ability to use a particular library; all libraries are open to all students.

The librarians thought carefully about what information would be most relevant for a prospective student to know. Research questions may not be on their mind, but they know that they will use the libraries as study spaces, and studying is likely what entering students can visualize themselves doing most readily. To that end, guides can explain the different atmospheres of the three main libraries, “characterizing for each of them the personality of each library so that they can begin to picture themselves connecting to one of those libraries. I think that is a really good way to start that relationship-building process between the student and the library.” Below are some examples of language that the librarians used to distinguish the study spaces and environment in the UL, Davis, and Wilson:

“The undergraduate library is called the Undergraduate Library, which leads people to conclude that Davis is the graduate library. But that’s not true. Davis Library is open to anyone and everyone, and it’s a great place to go to do some dedicated, individual, on-your-own studying because there are so many spaces in Davis. You can go all the way up to the 8th floor and sit by a window by yourself, and just really dig into a topic that you need to spend some focused time on.

The Undergraduate Library I would describe as having a more social atmosphere. It’s really good for group studying. It’s a place where people are comfortable interacting with each other. It’s a great place to book a study room and do some

collaborative work, and it's a place where people feel comfortable sleeping in the middle of the day. It kind of feels like your house—it's the R.B. *House* Undergraduate Library. It's like your extension of your dorm room. It's a little bit more informal.

Wilson Library is certainly a more formal and academic environment. I have heard a professor once say, 'I just feel smarter when I go in that building.' For people who really like that classic feeling of academia, and really thrive in a very quiet environment, this is a fantastic place for those people to do their research."

The libraries are here to support your learning, research, and creative endeavors.

How does the library support the ecosystem of learning on campus? One librarian suggested that guides frame the library by placing it within the broader student support network. Guides could explain "the role of the library in the learning community on campus" along with organizations like the Writing Center, Learning Center, or peer tutoring services, which all work together to contribute to student success.

Noting that prospective students may be unaware of how academic libraries differ from other kinds they have encountered, another librarian views the tours as an opportunity to present aspects of the library that may not be highly visible or obvious to prospective students.

"I would want them to highlight the ways that we can support them—student success—that they may not necessarily think of. They know we have books; that's not something we need to go over. I think I'd want them to focus more on those things that students don't necessarily associate with a university or their previous library. So I would want them to emphasize the Media Resource Center, because that's a research level collection, so talking about yes, we have film that you may want to watch for fun, but we have films that actually support your academics. I would want to focus on the kinds of creative support that we offer, the Design Lab help, the Media Lab help. Because I don't think that's common in a public library that you go to, or may not be in your school library, and a lot of the students who come here are coming from smaller towns, so their libraries really aren't going to be like that."

This librarian points out that students can easily figure out the library's hours, or whether an individual library's noise level suits their preferred study environment. Focusing

instead on library services like multimedia and design support exposes prospective students to the novel kinds of opportunities available at a university library.

Considering that “first-year students come here having never experienced any kind of academic library,” there is also a need to clarify “how Davis is distinct from the Undergraduate Library, and how each of them is distinct from Wilson Library” not just in terms of study spaces, but also the resources they offer. Most new students will not have previously encountered a special collections library, so it would be helpful for guides to give a short pitch about what a special collections library is. This would help to contextualize Wilson Library and explain why, with its absence of visible bookshelves, it does not look like any other library they have been to before.

The libraries are a place to get help.

“Every single person who works in the library is here to support your academic experience.” That is the message one of the librarians would most like prospective students to know. Tour guides can highlight librarians as a resource to help ease prospective student’s anxieties about performing research for college-level assignments. One of the librarians imagined a guide telling prospective students, “When your first paper comes, you’re going to feel really overwhelmed and you shouldn’t be. Go talk to a librarian.” Prospective students should get the message that “librarians are your friend” and you should feel comfortable approaching them whenever you need help. As another librarian said, “I’d want to emphasize that above all, we have people that want to help, so never feel bad about asking us for help—literally that’s what we’re here for. And if it’s not something we do, we’ll find you the people on campus who work on that.” A comment like this establishes the libraries’ function as a point of connection to

information and resources across campus, while countering students' fears about asking for help by encouraging them to talk to the librarians.

For many UNC students, the people on campus who support them are what make their college experience special and memorable. As one librarian says:

“I put it into perspective. There’s a lot to see on this campus, and if you’re a prospective student, probably it’s not the library that’s going to make or break your decision to come to Carolina. That’s why I think focusing on the people helps. Because I think overall, students feel an affinity to Carolina because of the people—staff, faculty, who care about them.

I feel for the students [tour guides]. It’s a really tricky balancing act because they do have to humanize campus in a way. I wish that talking about their experience they had with a library staff member, I wish they all had a positive experience to draw on. And not everyone is a library user. So maybe they don’t all have those experiences, but I wish they would draw more on those kinds of stories when they’re giving their tours.”

Librarians are part of the student support network, which guides could illustrate by talking about how helpful and accessible librarians are, and possibly by sharing a personal story about a librarian who helped them or a friend to strengthen this claim. “If the tour guide could share a personal experience of a time that a librarian helped them, or someone they know, that would encourage them to see the librarians as just as much of a useful resource—if not more of a useful resource—than the books on the shelves and electronic databases.”

4.2.2 What matters to a prospective student?

In general, guides tend not to talk about the library’s services beyond hours of operation. The librarians acknowledged that while they would love to plug all of the library’s services during a tour, such as the ability to schedule a personalized research consultation with a librarian, this would not be particularly useful for prospective

students. One librarian said, “I don’t know if I would get too much into the services, because I don’t know if you need that information on an Admissions tour.... I don’t think that sticks necessarily. But I think focusing on the people, and then what the student’s need is, because I think they are thinking: Where can I study? Where can I picture myself?”

Thinking realistically about the mindset of a prospective student and what concerns they might have, what the students would really want to know is how the library might impact their time on campus. “The library as a connection to community at the new place would be something that might resonate with them in a way,” which could involve talking about “the kind of study space or the kinds of groups that meet in the library.” Even more than specific services, the librarians would prefer that guides convey the broader message that the Libraries are well-used spaces that are welcoming, inclusive, and relevant for all students.

4.2.3 Where should they go?

The librarians also shared their opinions about which library would provide an optimal location for the tours to visit. Currently, the recommended route is for guides to pass through the basement level of Wilson Library. While Wilson Library has some gorgeous spaces, the basement is not one of them, and given considerations about accessibility and time limits, it is not feasible for the tours to explore the building’s upper levels. A better option would be the lobby in the UL or Davis, especially since these libraries tend to be the most heavily used by students on a regular basis. Walking into the lobby of Davis would likely be the least disruptive since the main floor is designed to accommodate heavier foot traffic and noise is most acceptable on the first floor.

The UL might be the best choice for prospective students and somewhere that they can feel comfortable walking into, since its three floors are less intimidating than Davis Library's eight. One of the librarians believes that the UL is a "first stop" for many students when they begin using libraries at UNC. "Once the students are here I'm guessing that for many of them, their first library experience is probably related to the UL, so if they've already stepped inside the UL as part of their tour, then it might make it seem more familiar." It would be useful to familiarize potential new students with the UL, especially since that library puts so much emphasis on being accessible to incoming students. Another librarian talked about a marketing concept called seven touches, which boils down to the idea that "someone has to be exposed to something seven times before they start to use it, or see themselves as a user or a customer of that thing." The Admissions tour can serve as a student's "first touch" in being exposed to the library.

Understanding that the library is just part of a bigger itinerary, the librarians would not expect tours to extensively walk through the library. Whether guides walk a tour through the lobby or talk outside of the building, time spent on libraries during the tour is brief so "it's almost more important what they say, even if what they say is outside." That being said, giving prospective students the chance to see the library space and students using the space would provide a valuable snapshot of student life and what the library can offer them. Reflecting on how campus tours serve a recruiting function, one of the librarians sees their value in showing prospective students how they will be supported and what their life will be like on campus. "I love it when groups come in [to Davis Library] and they just see how many people, how many different groups, how

many different kinds of students are here just using the space—and in a variety of ways. There are people studying in quiet, and people studying in groups. I think that really shows a prospective student all the possibilities in the library.” Tours can give prospective students a glimpse of the library, so they can see how it is full of different kinds of people who are using it in a variety of ways.

4.2.4 The big picture

One of the librarians offered the valuable insight that “what students hear on their tours is really also bound up in the experience that the tour guides themselves have in the libraries as undergraduates, and the more that they can be exposed to what the libraries offer, the better spokespeople they can be.” While having librarians talk to the guides and provide them with vetted information helps, at the end of the day, “the best thing we can do is to make sure they have a great experience with the library.” The ideal situation is for guides to have a positive experience with the library and to be able to share that with the tour audience in an authentic and compelling way.

While tour guides should continue to strive to present facts accurately, their audience of prospective students is unlikely to get bogged down in the details. As one librarian points out, “I’m sort of of the mind that, especially at this point, it doesn’t matter what the [prospective] students hear. Even if they hear something incorrect, it’s not sticking with them.” Instead, the focus for guide training about the libraries should emphasize how and why students might use them. “I want them to hear that the library is a good place to go, that it could contribute to your success as a student.” A successful overview of the libraries helps prospective students picture themselves in the library

space and conveys the library's role in supporting them, ideally generating positive feelings about the library when it is presented as a useful and accessible place.

4.3 From the Admissions staff perspective

The Admissions staff is aware that the presentation of the libraries varies on the tours based on guides' personal experiences with the libraries, with one staff member acknowledging that "it's incredibly different depending on the person" and how much time they spend in a particular library. Ideally, guides would talk about "the various resources that are housed within each library and how different they are." For example, "the collections within Wilson are very different than the media resources that you have inside the UL, versus the research opportunities in Davis. So I really like engaging how each library has a different facet and how they collectively improve the entire library system."

4.3.1 Developing the campus tour

In assessing the tour guides' presentation of the libraries, it is helpful to know more about how and why the tours are developed, as well as the tour guide training process. According to the Admissions staff members to whom I spoke, the purpose of the tours is to "market the university well.... we really want to be engaging prospective students and their families to the best of our capability, such that not only do they come to see Carolina as just this opportunity, but they come to see Carolina as home." The tours are also intended to help the tour audience "get a sense to see and feel the campus and that hustle and bustle." Seeing the campus allows prospective students to envision themselves attending school at UNC and get a sense for what a student's daily life is like.

Admissions is currently revising the tour format based on feedback from their visit surveys. The old tours consisted of four stops outside of buildings, but with the redesigned tour route, guides are encouraged to take the tour groups inside buildings. The goal is to find ways to “include more of a typical day for a student” by “using the libraries and different buildings on campus to provide more resources to help fill out that full experience.... If there’s a place on campus that a student is going to be visiting often, we want to show them that on the campus tour so they can see what their life is going to be like here.” According to their visit survey feedback, some people specifically expressed a desire to go into a library or to see where students study, so the libraries are a topic of interest for prospective students and their families. Since most students will spend time in the libraries during their time at UNC, entering the buildings can help round out the picture of student life from an academic perspective, and guides are now required to stop in a library at some point during their tour.

Part of redesigning the tour is finding a way to balance requests to go into more buildings with a route that accommodates accessibility needs, meaning avoiding stairs and choosing a path with the option to take a ramp. These considerations factored into the decision to add the basement level of Wilson Library to the tour route. In addition to being accessible, this area is “a great pass-through area to walk from one location to the next and have them be able to see and feel a library even though it is the basement level. They’re still getting that sense of ‘we visited a library.’” Unfortunately, the basement level of Wilson is not an ideal stop from the library’s perspective, because the majority of the space houses staff work areas and not study spaces or resources for students to use. The basement level also contrasts starkly the beauty of Wilson Library’s upper floors, so

it is worth investigating an alternate route that accommodates accessibility and logistical concerns while providing a more attractive and representative experience of how students use the libraries. Aside from Wilson, the other obvious options for library tour stops are Davis and the UL, but these choices were nixed by Admissions staff due to concerns that tour groups would be too disruptive and would distract students using the library.

4.3.2 How are guides trained?

Becoming a tour guide involves a long and selective application process, followed by a formal training program. Despite the fact that these are volunteer unpaid positions, there is no shortage of interested students (demand far exceeds the number of positions available), and all are vetted to ensure that they are prepared for the responsibility and expectations, and equally crucially, that they have the requisite “spirit and the passion for Carolina.” The training process evolves with each cohort of guides, and currently involves three hour-long training sessions to provide background information, followed by a mock tour. Trainees then undergo a shadowing process where they gradually take over parts of the tour until they lead a full tour, at which point they are evaluated.

At the beginning of training, to build their knowledge base, guides are provided with a fact sheet outlining all of the things that they need to learn. Another component of guide training involves sharing personal stories and experiences. This information is captured in a “homework” portion of the outline, which asks guides to respond to questions with how they would phrase it on their tour as a personal experience. Guides also share these stories with each other in meetings, and are encouraged to repurpose the stories on their tours by talking about what “someone they know” has done. This process allows guides to share a greater range of the student experience beyond their own.

The outline document contains key quick facts since “timing is everything” and each location has a limited time allowance. The facts are guidelines that provide a shared knowledge base and structure, rather than serving as a script, and guides are encouraged to personalize the tour by sharing their own stories and experiences. Guides are provided with suggested information, but “we tell our tour guides from day one that it is their tour.... Insert your own stories here. Make the tour yours. That’s the only real script we give them, and it’s never really a script. It’s just an expectation.”

The fact sheet is compiled with help from the Admissions office, which supplies the Ambassadors programming with facts to add. However, this means that the sources for the facts and the frequency of updating is unclear, which may explain why inaccurate information could appear. The libraries are mentioned during one of the in-person guide training sessions and in the fact sheet. The libraries section of this sheet contains the following bullet points:

- The Library of Congress and the Ivy League systems are the only library systems that are larger than UNC’s
 - Our library system is composed of 15 on campus libraries
 - The system is also composed of an inter-library loan system between UNC, NC State, NCCU, and Duke
- 4 book collections in Wilson Library are the North Carolina collection, the Rare Books collection, the Southern Folklife collection, and the Southern Historical collection

Unfortunately, all of this information is technically inaccurate, and the last point is not information that the libraries would prioritize. (Regarding the last point, the Southern Folklife Collection and the Southern Historical Collection are archival collections, as is the University Archives and Records Management Services, which is not mentioned.

While the North Carolina Collection does contain books, it contains a significant body of materials in other formats, so the label “book collection” is misleading.) Guides are told

to speak up if they feel a fact is erroneous or out of date, and those involved in guide training are committed to improving the information they provide. Academic libraries only stand to benefit from reaching out to their institutions' admissions departments to review and revise the library content on the tours.

With limited time and a lot of ground to cover, UNC's Admissions department is seeking information in the format of "top five things to know" about campus units, and they are eager to have the library provide this to ensure that guides are relaying accurate information. Occasionally they invite staff from across campus to their monthly meetings to give a brief presentation about their resource, and are very open to having a librarian educate guides about the library's resources, how to better use the library, and how to better frame the library system at UNC. They are also open to feedback on what would be an optimal tour route, and would accept librarians stepping in to briefly speak to tour groups if they come across them.

4.3.3 What are the guides saying?

Guides are encouraged to tell stories, and another admissions staff member thought that good stories to tell about the library would be about how an individual guide uses their preferred library as a study space (which was certainly the case for the tours observed):

"Some students like it where it's really quiet, and other students like it where it's really loud. Some students like a secluded, small space in the corner, and others like to be surrounded by other people studying... So I think a personal story about what they do in the library is great, concise, short, but at the same time I think some history is important to the library. How many books are in the library? How are we getting books from other places? I think all of those components really help to shape what that space is—that space of learning and studying and engaging, and overall success here at Carolina. And I hope that they feel that when they're walking through too."

Another staff member emphasized the library as a window into what academic rigor looks like at UNC, and an opportunity for prospective students to picture themselves in campus spaces.

“I tell all of the guests if they have extra time here, you should probably step in a library or two, because you’re probably going to spend a lot of time there and Carolina is academically rigorous. It’s known for that. But the joy of that then is you have such great resources here... I think it’s always really beneficial for someone who’s coming to Carolina to think about yes I’m going to live in a residence hall, yes I’m going to spend time eating on campus, but you do spend a lot of time studying on campus and so you need to figure out what’s this going to look like for the next four years? What are my opportunities? What are the resources here?”

Also worthy of mention is the role of the library in the University’s research community and the accessibility of materials beyond UNC’s campus.

“You need to think about what sort of opportunities does the library offer besides just a study space? How does it integrate into the rest of the research community? And so that’s what I think is really important about the libraries and why they need to be talked about, and why I like telling our guests about them. Because they’re really impressive in terms of their ability to connect you to the rest of campus and even across the world. I think my favorite part of a tour is sometimes when I tell parents that you can get a book like literally from anywhere in the world, but the nice thing is there’s a very good chance that it’s within the Triangle because of our library system, and just how deep and vast it is. So that’s one of the really big perks of our UNC Library system and the shared network that we have with Duke and NC State.”

One question I posed to the Admissions staff members asked about their perception of the similarity between what they train the tour guides to say and what the guides actually say. They acknowledged that this challenge is not unique to UNC, but “is something that I think all programs struggle with. There’s only so much that you can say and do and tell them. You just want to make sure that they’re leading groups appropriately and provide the experience to our guests that is a positive one but also information that helps them find fit for their tours.” While an evaluation is currently

included in new guide training, they are working on developing a follow-up evaluation to assess seasoned guides. Another staff member shared the insight that “I think a lot of it is there’s this degradation across time as people get further away from their training.

Especially if they’re not super involved in the Admission Ambassador program. People typically take two routes: They’ll either be incredibly involved from day one, or they will finish their training and they will give a tour every two weeks and then they just never show up to anything else.” The quality and accuracy of information on the tours varies based on how much the volunteer guides commit to continually learning and improving. For example, the guides meet monthly and receive emails to discuss areas of improvement on the tours, but if someone doesn’t attend the meeting or read their email, they will remain unaware of the issue.

“There’s probably also a lot of tour guides that go way above my expectation and probably have some incredible stories about the library system, or something that their friends have done in terms of research through the library system. I know when I was a tour guide being trained we talked about how you can do undergraduate research in Wilson Library and that was something that I’d never heard of, but something that’s a really cool and unique opportunity that a lot of people don’t associate with the library system is undergraduate research.”

Guides will inevitably prioritize their involvement in the tours at different levels, and even if a guide reviews all of their training materials, they are encouraged to embellish these facts with personal stories, so standardization is not possible or even desirable. Providing the guides with key talking points is not an effort to script them, but rather to gently steer them in the right direction, understanding that the tour guide’s personality should still shine through.

5 Conclusions

There was considerable variation in how the libraries were presented on the six admissions tours observed. One guide barely mentioned the libraries, spending a couple of sentences on Davis and entirely leaving out the UL and Wilson. On the other end of the spectrum, another guide introduced themselves by following up their list of majors with the comment that, because of them, they “spend a lot of time at the library.” This guide was an experienced library user who talked knowledgeably about all the libraries on campus—even the branch libraries. For the most part, the guides made an effort to present the libraries in a positive light. One guide highly encouraged using the libraries, saying, “There’s a ton of resources you can use at these libraries and that’s something you really want to take advantage of for sure while you’re here.” However, most guides focused on the distinguishing characteristics of the libraries in terms of atmosphere and type of study environment, while research support only received a cursory mention in a couple of instances.

While most of the information the guides shared was accurate, a few misperceptions appeared as recurring themes. The most common was the conflation of the TRLN consortium shared resources and ILL, which are related but not the same thing. Another misinformed comment was that Wilson Library is “technically our graduate library, but it’s open to all students.” In truth, the libraries are open to all parts of the campus population as well as the public, and none of the libraries is dedicated for a select segment of users, nor are undergraduate students at the bottom of some imagined totem

pole. Librarians have overheard these types of comments on tours, but in reality, the libraries are open to everyone and there is no hierarchy of whom the libraries serve or prioritize. Overall, the misperceptions overheard on the tours in this study are not very harmful, but do indicate the need for guides to have more robust training about what the libraries offer.

The findings from the tour guide observations and interviews with library and admissions staff uncovered similar experiences as other libraries have had with admissions campus tours. Maggie Gallup Kopp of Brigham Young University overheard guides sharing quick facts about their library, including that it is ranked among top college libraries in the Princeton Review rankings (195). Guides talking about UNC having one of the largest library systems also followed this tendency of using ranking lists as a point of pride in showing off the library. As with UNC's tours, Miller found that students tend to focus on talking about the library building rather than the services it provides or how the library supports academic life on campus. UNC librarians echoed Gallup Kopp's recommendation about using campus tours as an opportunity to heighten incoming students' familiarity, comfort level, and awareness of the library and librarians, and how they can help students.

Discussing her involvement with the admissions department at Miami University, Lindsay Miller tells librarians that "you may find their anecdotes about literally camping out at the library or the fact that they only come in during their tour guide shift less than appealing." Guides should share authentic personal stories, but preferably ones that highlight how the library helps students, rather than describing stressful all-night study sessions. She advises librarians to "share real stories about the library. If you do have a

chance to talk one-on-one with students, tell stories about how the library has impacted other students and how the library makes things easier. I like to give the students the inside scoop on the best places to study and how the library culturally fits in on campus.” Library segments on admissions campus tours would greatly benefit from explanations of the library’s role in supporting the larger mission of the university and student success.

Academic libraries and admissions departments both stand to benefit from improving how tour guides frame and talk about the library. Incoming and prospective students seek to get a grasp on what their college experience might be from the campus tour, and parents accompanying their child may have an outdated idea about what a library is and what it can do. Librarians should talk to tour guides about how the library can contribute to their success, whether that means receiving help from a librarian on an academic assignment or using library-provided design software and equipment for a creative project. Librarians should also address common misconceptions about the library and position their institution as an essential part of the framework for research and learning that occurs on campus. By working together, libraries and admissions departments can achieve a mutually beneficial goal of improving the relationship-building process between incoming students and the library, which is an integral part of the broader campus community these students are envisioning joining.

6 Future Research

While this study focused on admissions campus tours, another avenue of research would be to investigate and compare how libraries are presented on tours for admitted students or for new students during orientation. Asking incoming students about their initial perceptions of the libraries, and what shaped those perceptions, could further reveal the importance of admissions tours as an initial source of information about important campus resources. This research could also be expanded upon by observing more tours and interviewing the tour guides to ask follow-up questions, or by talking to more front desk staff about what they have overheard about the libraries during the tours.

One outcome of this study is that the UNC Libraries system has established communication with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and is providing them with information about the tours. The Library may also wish to incorporate this information as part of its onboarding messaging during student orientation tours.

7 Bibliography

"About." *UNC Admissions Ambassadors*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Mar. 2017.

Barber, Peggy. *Building a Buzz: Libraries & Word-of-mouth Marketing*. Chicago:

American Library Association, 2010. Print.

Dowd, Nancy. *Bite-sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for the Overworked Librarian*.

Chicago: American Library Association, 2010. Print.

Gallup Kopp, Maggie. "Academic libraries, institutional missions, and new student

recruitment: a case study." *Reference Services Review*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2013., pp.

192-200.doi:10.1108/00907321311326192.

Greer, Jeff. "4 Reasons Why the Library Should Affect Your College Choice."

Usnews.com, *U.S. News & World Report*, 17 June 2010,

[http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-](http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school/choices/articles/2010/06/17/4-reasons-why-the-library-affects-your-college-choice)

[school/choices/articles/2010/06/17/4-reasons-why-the-library-affects-your-](http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school/choices/articles/2010/06/17/4-reasons-why-the-library-affects-your-college-choice)

[college-choice.](http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school/choices/articles/2010/06/17/4-reasons-why-the-library-affects-your-college-choice)

Lombard, Emmett. "The Role of the Academic Library in College Choice." *Journal of*

Academic Librarianship, vol. 38, no. 4, 2012., pp. 237-

241.doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2012.04.001.

Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. *Designing Qualitative Research*. 5th ed.

Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011. Print.

Maxim, Paul S. *Quantitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. New York:

Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.

Miller, Lindsay. "The library and the campus visit: Communicating value to prospective students and parents." *College & Research Libraries News*, vol. 73, 2012.

Neuendorf, Kimberly A. *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2002. Print.

Potter, Ned. *The Library Marketing Toolkit*. Facet Pub., 2012. Print.

Schneider, Zola Dincin. *Campus Visits & College Interviews: A Complete Guide for College-bound Students and Their Families*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: College Board, 2012. Print.

Tour Guide Fact Sheet 2016-2017. N.p.: UNC Admissions Ambassadors, 2017. Print.

Wildemuth, Barbara M. *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2009. Print.

8 Appendix: Interview Questions

8.1 Interview questions for the Librarians and Library Administrator

1. Have you seen tour guides talking about the libraries during Admissions campus tours? If so, how would you assess their presentation of the library/libraries to the tour audience? Can you recall any specific statements that they have made about the libraries?
2. What are the three most important things that you think the tour guides should talk about?
3. Where in the library do you think the tour should stop?

8.2 Interview questions for the Admissions Staff

1. From your perspective, what is the purpose of the Admissions campus tours?
2. Why do you include the libraries as part of the tour?
3. How do you select the tour locations that are inside or outside the library?
4. What is your sense of how the libraries are presented on the tours? Which libraries are included? Why did you select those ones?
5. What is the process for tour guide training?
6. How are tour guides informed of what to say about the libraries?
7. What is your perception of the similarity between what you train the tour guides to say and what they actually say?
8. Tour guides are encouraged to tell stories. In your ideal world, what stories would the tour guides tell about the library?